
The New Oxford American Dictionary

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h) very: I'm awfully sorry to bother you so
by nice again.
r unpleasantly: we played awfully.
will | adv. for a short time: stand here

English *âne huite* '(for) a while.'

adverb **awhile** (we paused awhile) should
one word. The noun phrase, meaning 'a
,', esp. when preceded by a preposition,
often as two words (*Margaret rested for a
e there in a while*). See also **usage** at

whirl | adj. [predic.] in a whirl; whirling: her
girl with images.

awkward | adj. 1 causing difficulty; hard to
h: one of the most awkward jobs is painting
awkward questions | the wheelbarrow can
maneuver.

liberately unreasonable or uncooperat-
ing damned awkward! | please excuse my
e's at an awkward age.

elting embarrassment or inconvenience:
in a very awkward situation.

or graceful; ungainly: Luther's awkward
ded his progress | she was long-legged and
d.

ble or abnormal: make sure the baby isn't
an awkward position.

ES **awkwardly** adv.; **awkwardness** n.
Middle English (in the sense 'the wrong
upside down'): from dialect *awk* 'back-
e, clumsy' (from Old
turned the wrong way')

period of ad-
marked' by self-
and moody behavior.
small pointed tool used
les, esp. in leather.

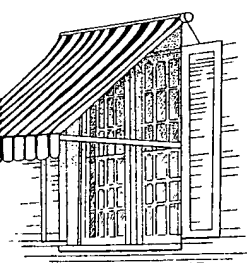
English *æl*, of German
related to German

botany a stiff bristle, esp.
rowing from the ear or
y, rye, and many grass-

ES **awned** adj.
English, from Old Norse *ogun*; related to
Danish *avn*.

NG | n. a sheet of canvas or other mater-
n a frame and used to keep the sun or
front, window, doorway, or deck.

17th cent. (originally in nautical use);
origin.



awning

past of **AWAKE**.

ökan | past participle of **AWAKE**.

| adj. [predic.] Military absent from where
but without intent to desert: the men
OL | humorous now the parrot has gone

Os: acronym from *absent without (official)*

adv. & adj. away from the appropriate,
expected course; amiss: [as adv.] many
ces go awry | [as predic. adj.] I got the in-
something was awry.

normal or correct position; askew: [as
was hatless, his silver hair awry.

Middle English: from A-² 'on' + **WRY**.

adj. [attrib.] informal (of a personal quality or
deprecating and shy: his aw-shucks nice-
is convincing nature.

20th cent.: from **AW** + **SHUCKS** (see

axe) n. 1 a tool typically used for chop-
ually a steel blade attached at a right an-
n handle.

■ figurative a measure intended to
reduce costs drastically, esp.
one that involves elimination of
staff: thirty workers are facing
the ax in the assembly depart-
ment.

2 informal a musical instrument,
esp. a jazz musician's saxophone
or a bass guitar.

v. [trans.] 1 end, cancel, or dismiss
suddenly and ruthlessly: the com-
pany is axing 125 jobs | 2,500 staff
were axed as part of the realignment.

■ reduce (costs or services) dras-
tically: the candidates all
promised to ax government spend-
ing.

2 cut or strike with an ax, esp. vi-
olently or destructively: the door had been axed by the
firefighters.

■ PHRASES **have an ax to grind** have a self-serving rea-
son for doing or being involved in something: she joined
the board because she had an ax to grind with the school
system.

■ **ORIGIN** Old English *æx*, of Germanic origin; related
to Dutch *aks* and German *Axt*.

axel | 'æksəl | (also **Axel**) n. Figure Skating a jump with
a forward takeoff from the forward outside edge of one
skate to the backward outside edge of the other, with
one and a half turns in the air.

■ **ORIGIN** 1930s: named after Axel R. Paulsen (1885-
1938), Norwegian skater.

axenic | 'a:zēnik; 'a:zēn- | adj. chiefly Botany of, relating
to, or denoting a culture that is free from living organ-
isms other than the species required.

■ **DERIVATIVES** **axenically** | -ik(ə)lē | adv.

■ **ORIGIN** 1940s: from *a-* 'not' + Greek *xenikos* 'alien,
strange' + *-ic*.

axes | 'æks, sēz | plural form of **AXIS**.

axial | 'æksēəl | adj. of, forming, or relating to an
axis: the main axial road.

■ around an axis: the axial rotation rate of the earth.

■ **DERIVATIVES** **axially** adv.

axil | 'æksəl | n. Botany the upper angle between a leaf
stalk or branch and the stem or trunk from
which it is growing.

■ **ORIGIN** late 18th
cent.: from Latin *axilla*
'armpit' (see **AXILLA**).

axilla | 'æksə'lə | n. (pl.
axillae | -sēl) Anatomy
the space below the
shoulder through
which vessels and
nerves enter and leave
the upper arm; a per-
son's armpit.

■ Botany an axil.

■ **ORIGIN** early 17th cent.: from Latin, diminutive of
ala 'wing.'

axillary | 'æksə,lərē | adj. Anatomy of or relating to the
armpit: enlargement of the axillary lymph nodes.

■ Botany in or growing from an axil: axillary shoots. Of-
ten contrasted with **TERMINAL**.

axillary bud n. a bud that grows from the axil of a
leaf and may develop into a branch or flower cluster.
Also called **LATERAL BUD**.

axiom | 'æksēəm | n. a statement or proposition that
is regarded as being established, accepted, or self-
evidently true: the axiom that supply equals demand.

■ chiefly Mathematics a statement or proposition on which
an abstractly defined structure is based.

■ **ORIGIN** late 15th cent.: from French *axiome* or Latin
axioma, from Greek *axiōma* 'what is thought fitting,'
from *axios* 'worthy.'

axiomatic | 'æksē,ə'tik; 'æksē'mætik | adj. self-evident or un-
questionable: it is axiomatic that dividends have to be
financed.

■ [attrib.] chiefly Mathematics relating to or containing ax-
ioms.

■ **DERIVATIVES** **axiomatically** | -ik(ə)lē | adv.

■ **ORIGIN** late 18th cent.: from Greek *axiōmatikos*,
from *axiōma* 'what is thought fitting' (see **AXIOM**).

axion | 'æksē,ən | n. Physics a hypothetical subatomic
particle postulated to account for the rarity of process-
es that break charge-parity symmetry. It is very light,
electrically neutral, and pseudoscalar.

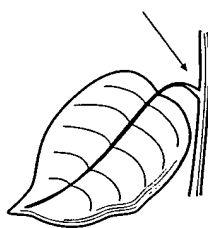
■ **ORIGIN** 1970s: from **AXIAL** + **-ON**.

axis | 'æksis | n. (pl. *axes* | -sēz) 1 an imaginary line
about which a body rotates: the earth revolves on its axis
once every 24 hours.

■ Geometry an imaginary straight line passing through
the center of a symmetrical solid, and about which a
plane figure can be conceived as rotating to generate



ax 1



axil

the solid. ■ an imaginary line that divides something
into equal or roughly equal halves, esp. in the direc-
tion of its greatest length.

2 Mathematics a fixed reference line for the measurement
of coordinates: the variable that is thought of as a cause
is placed on the horizontal axis, and the variable that is
thought of as an effect on the vertical axis.

3 a straight central part in a structure to which other
parts are connected.

■ Botany the central column of an inflorescence or
other growth. ■ Zoology the skull and backbone of a
vertebrate animal.

4 Anatomy the second cervical vertebra, below the atlas
at the top of the backbone.

5 an agreement or alliance between two or more coun-
tries that forms a center for an eventual larger group-
ing of nations: the Anglo-American axis.

■ (the Axis) the alliance of Germany and Italy
formed before and during World War II, later ex-
tended to include Japan and other countries: [as adj.]
the Axis Powers.

■ **ORIGIN** late Middle English: from Latin, 'axle,
pivot.'

axis deer (also **axis**) n. a deer that has lyre-shaped
antlers and a fawn coat with white spots, native to In-
dia and Sri Lanka.

■ *Cervus axis*, family Cervidae.

■ **ORIGIN** early 17th cent.: *axis* from Latin, the name of
an Indian animal mentioned by Pliny.

axisymmetric | 'æksē'sə'metrik | adj. Geometry sym-
metrical about an axis.

axle | 'æksəl | n. a rod or spindle (either fixed or ro-
tating) passing through the center of a wheel or group
of wheels: [as adj.] axle grease | axle loads.

■ **ORIGIN** Middle English (originally *axle-tree*): from
Old Norse *axlitr*.

axman | 'æks,mæn | (also **axeman**) n. (pl. **-men**) 1 a
person who works with an ax: he was like an axman at
work in a tangled thicket.

2 informal a rock or jazz guitarist.

axminster | 'æks,mɪnstər | (also **Axminster carpet**)
n. a kind of machine-woven patterned carpet with a
cut pile.

■ **ORIGIN** early 19th cent.: named after the town of
Axminster in southern England, noted since the 18th
cent. for the production of carpets.

axolotl | 'æksə,lətl | n. a Mexican salamander which
in natural conditions retains its aquatic newtlike larval
form throughout life but is able to breed.

■ *Ambystoma mexicanum*, family Ambystomatidae.

■ **ORIGIN** late 18th cent.: from Nahuatl, from *atl* 'wa-
ter' + *xolotl* 'servant.'

axon | 'æks,ən | n. the long threadlike part of a nerve
cell along which impulses are conducted from the cell
body to other cells.

■ **DERIVATIVES** **axonal** | 'æksənəl; 'æks,ənəl | adj.

■ **ORIGIN** mid 19th cent. (denoting the body axis):
from Greek *axōn* 'axis.'

axosome | 'æksə,nēm | n. Biology the central strand
of a cilium or flagellum. It is composed of an array of
microtubules, typically in nine pairs around two single
central ones.

■ **DERIVATIVES** **axosomeal** | 'æksə,nēməl | adj.

■ **ORIGIN** early 20th cent.: from Greek *axōn* 'axis' +
nēma 'thread.'

axonometric | 'æksənō'metrik | adj. using or des-
ignating an orthographic projection of an object, such
as a building, on a plane inclined to each of the three
principal axes of the object; three-dimensional but
without perspective.

axoplasm | 'æksə,plæzəm | n. Biology the cytoplasm
of a nerve axon.

■ **DERIVATIVES** **axoplasmic** | 'æksə,plæzmik | adj.

Axum variant spelling of **AKSUM**.

ay | i; a | exclam. & n. variant spelling of **AYE**.

Aya-cu-cho | 'i;ə'koo'cho | a city in the Andes in south
central Peru; pop. 101,600.

ayah | 'i;ə | n. a native maid or nursemaid employed
by Europeans in India.

■ **ORIGIN** Anglo-Indian, from Portuguese *aia* 'nurse,'
feminine of *ao* 'tutor.'

ayahuasca | 'i;ə'hu'waskə | n. a tropical vine native to
the Amazon region, noted for its hallucinogenic prop-
erties.

■ Genus *Banisteriopsis*, family Malpighiaceae: several species,
in particular *B. caapi*.

■ a hallucinogenic drink prepared from the bark of
this.

■ **ORIGIN** 1940s: from South American Spanish, from
Quechua *ayawaskha*, from *aya* 'corpse' + *waskha*
'rope.'

Ayatollah | 'i;ə'tə'lə | n. a Shi'ite religious leader in
Iran.

■ **ORIGIN** 1950s: from Persian, from Arabic *'āyatullāh*,
literally 'token of God.'

Aya-tol-lah Kho-meini see
Ayck-bourn | 'æk,börn |, Sir
playwright. Notable plays: *Re-
Abund Person Singular* (1973)
proval (1985).

aye | i; | (also **aye**) exclam. archa
assent; yes: aye, you're right ab
■ (**aye, aye**) Nautical a respon-
der: aye, aye, captain. ■ (in v
vor say, "aye."

■ n. an affirmative answer or a
House was divided: Ayes 211, N-

■ PHRASES **the ayes have it** the
majority.

■ **ORIGIN** late 16th cent.: pro-
personal pronoun, expressing
aye | a; | adv. archaic or Scottis

■ PHRASES **for aye** for ever. I
for aye.

■ **ORIGIN** Middle English: fr-
lated to Latin *aeonum* 'age' and
'aeon.'

aye-aye | 'i; i; | n. a rare noi-
mate allied to the lemurs. It
teeth and an elongated twig
with which it pries insects fr-

■ *Daubentonia madagascariensis*, t-
ily Daubentoniidae.

■ **ORIGIN** late 18th cent.: from

Ayer | er; |, Sir A. J. (1910-8
full name *Alfred Jules Ayer*. E-
ponent of logical positivis-
guage, Truth, and Logic (19
Knowledge) (1956).

Ayers Rock | er; er; | 'dær; |
ern Territory, Australia, sou-
The largest monolith in the v-
m) high and about 6 miles
Aboriginal name **ULURU**.

Ayeshah | 'i;eshə | the wife o
Aymara | 'i;mə'rə | n. (pl.
member of a South Americ-
ing the high plateau region
Lake Titicaca.

2 the language of this peopl-
adj. of or relating to this peo-
■ **ORIGIN** Spanish.

Ayrshire | 'er;shə; -shir; |
white breed of dairy cattle.
■ **ORIGIN** mid 19th cent.: n-
mer Scottish county where

AYT | abbr. Computing informal (i-
A-yub Khan | 'i;ə'jəb 'kə
(1907-74), Pakistani soldie-
1958-69.

Ayurveda | 'i;əv'rə'də; -
Hindu system of medicine,
of balance in bodily syste-
treatment, and yogic breath

■ **DERIVATIVES** **Ayurvedic**

■ **ORIGIN** from Sanskrit *āyur-*
AZ | abbr. Arizona (in official

Azad Kashmir | 'i;əzəd kə-
mous state in northeastern
Kashmir; administrative ce-
established in 1949 after K-
of the partition of India.

■ **ORIGIN** from Urdu, litera

azalea | 'ə'zəliə | n. a dec-
the heath family with clu-
sometimes fragrant flower

rhododendrons, azaleas are
than most other rhododen-

■ Genus *Rhododendron*, family

■ **ORIGIN** mid 18th cent.: f-
feminine of *azaleus* 'dry,' b
in dry soil.

azan | 'ə'zən | n. the Musli
ically made by a muezzin
mosque.

■ **ORIGIN** mid 19th cent.
nouncement.' Compare wi

azeotrope | 'ə'zē,trop |
liquids that has a constant
tion throughout distillation

■ **DERIVATIVES** **azeotropic**
pik | adj.

■ **ORIGIN** early 20th cent.:
zein 'to boil' + *tropos* 'turn

Azerbairan | 'ə'zər,bɪ'jən
southeastern Europe, in th
shore of the Caspian Sea

Baku; languages, Azerbaij